

TO: The Honorable Vanessa Atterbeary, Chair
House Ways and Means Committee

FROM: Annie Coble
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Johns Hopkins would like to offer information that demonstrates the value of vision screening programs in schools, which may be helpful to the Committee in consideration of **HB 1233 Public Schools – Health and Vision Services – Required Screenings and Eye Examinations**. This bill works to expand access to vision care for students across the state. We would like to take this opportunity to highlight the Vision for Baltimore program and the importance of vision screenings, eye exams, and glasses for students who need them.

Johns Hopkins partners, with Baltimore City Public Schools, Baltimore City Health Department, Warby Parker, and Vision To Learn for the Vision for Baltimore (V4B) program. V4B provides vision screenings, eye exams and glasses to Baltimore City students directly in their schools. Currently in its sixth year V4B has conducted vision screenings for more than 64,000 students, over 13,000 eye exams for students who failed vision screenings, and distributed more than 9,700 pairs of eyeglasses.

Vision for Baltimore works through the collaboration of several participating organizations mentioned above. The Baltimore City Health Department technicians conduct a vision screening assessment on all students enrolled in grades preK – 8th at participating schools. The Vision To Learn mobile clinic conducts eye exams for students who fail the vision screening and provide consent. If the optometrist finds that a student needs glasses, they are prescribed and ordered. Students can pick from a variety of Warby Parker frames. Vision To Learn visits each school to distribute the glasses, customized with the student's prescription, and fitted by a trained optician. School staff and V4B staff work together to encourage students to wear their glasses, and track their success. Ongoing program support and school engagement is provided by Johns Hopkins School Vision Advocates.

A groundbreaking study, published September 2021 in *JAMA Ophthalmology* compared test scores and academic progress for student who received eyeglasses through V4B over a 3-year period. The result showed improved test scores in English Language Arts and Math on state i-Ready assessment. There were also large gains for students in special education, students performing in the lowest quartile at baseline. For example, all students gained the equivalent of 2-4 months of additional learning time, and students in the lowest quartile and in special education gained the equivalent of 4-6 months.

In closing, one third of Baltimore students failed a vision screening; V4B successfully connected them with eye exams and glasses directly in their schools. V4B can and should serve as a model to advance health and educational equity for disadvantaged students in school districts across Maryland.